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THE BEGINNINGS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN NEW ENGLAND.—*Continued*

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II

The terms "public school" and "free school" have had various meanings historically. In many cases the English endowed grammar schools were "public" only in the sense that they were open to all classes, and "free" only for a limited number of pupils. When these terms were transferred to New England they were used sometimes as in England, and at other times in a quite different sense. In tracing the evolution of our system of public education in this chapter, we are concerned primarily with the action of New England towns in their corporate capacity, as the inhabitants voted in town meeting respecting the establishment, management, and support of town schools. A public school in this sense involved, first, establishment by the town; that is, either initiating it by vote in town meeting, or taking over a private school; second, management by the town either directly or by delegating power to the selectmen or appointed committees; third, support by means of town property—often public lands set aside as an endowment for schools, or funds obtained by taxes levied on all or a portion of the property in the town. It will be seen later that the early history of public schools shows many combinations involving

mixed systems of public and private establishment, management, and support. There were of course other agencies for education besides town schools, such as privately endowed schools, private schools, private tutors, education through the apprenticeship system, and parental education. But such agencies are reserved for future treatment.

Although some of the essential principles of our public-school system were in operation in New England before 1647, it is difficult to determine precisely their origin and evolution. At this date there were six separate colonies,¹ containing at least sixty towns,² in all stages of development. Some were mere clearings in the forest—small frontier settlements; others were in a later period of growth, but still in the early stages of their institutional beginnings, with a population of perhaps thirty or forty families each, or even less. Scarcely one-third of the towns could have had as many as one hundred or more families, and nearly all of these were situated on or near the coast.³ How many are known to have established and supported town schools before 1647?

¹ Namely, Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, New Haven, Rhode Island, and Maine. New Hampshire was absorbed by Massachusetts in 1641 and continued under her jurisdiction until 1679. Maine was also absorbed by Massachusetts in 1652. The date 1647 is taken, because on November 11, 1647, Massachusetts passed an act compelling towns of a certain population to set up town schools. (*Rec. Co. Mass. Bay*, II, 203.)

² Massachusetts Bay had 32, Plymouth 10, Connecticut 9, New Haven 5, and Rhode Island 4. There were other settlements, which are not included in this list. Maine had a number, such as York, Saco, and Wells; but some were not governed as towns, and in the case of others records are lost, so that we have no evidence of town action on schools in Maine before 1647. There were also in Massachusetts "plantations" or settlements consisting of a small number of families, sometimes governed by the General Court, but which later became full-fledged towns with all the powers of self-government. (See Hubbard, "Hist. of New Eng.," *Mass. Hist. Soc. Collec.*, 2d ser., VI, 416-17, for illustration.) Compare also, Lechford, *Plaine Dealing*, etc. (ed. by Trumbull), who speaks of "farmes or villages," pp. 40-41, 106-107. Lechford was a lawyer who resided at Boston, 1638-41. For a list of towns, with dates, for Massachusetts, and Plymouth, see C. D. Wright, *Rept. on Custody and Cond. of Pub. Rec. of Mass.* (1889), pp. 149-303. See also the list in "Good News from New England" (London, 1648), *Mass. Hist. Soc. Collec.*, 4th ser., I, 212. This contains the towns and pastors, with their salaries.

³ Population statistics of towns in this period can be gleaned only incidentally from the town records and histories.

The principal original sources for this information are town records. But here, as is often the case, the historian is confronted with records that are unsatisfactory. Some are missing, others imperfect, and still others survive as incomplete copies of originals. We thus have good reasons for believing that surviving records reveal the minimum rather than the maximum extent of the educational activity of the towns in this period. Nevertheless we must base our conclusions only on evidence supported by existing data. With respect to Massachusetts it appears that out of thirty-two towns established, the records of at least six are entirely missing for this period, while others are imperfect. Of the twenty-six towns which have records, nineteen fail to record action on schools before 1647. This leaves only seven in which there is a record of a town vote on this subject.¹ In New Haven Colony we find only two towns, in Connecticut only one, and in Rhode Island only one, in which there are votes concerning schools. Not a single town in Plymouth Colony, Maine, or New Hampshire, either before or after it came under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts, took action before the date in question.² We have then only eleven towns to consider.³

There are many interesting questions concerning the origin of certain features of our public-school system. For example, one would like to know which town first established and opened a public school, and supported it in whole or in part out of public property or by the levy of a tax on a portion or all of the property-holders; which first appointed a schoolmaster and fixed his salary, or established a school committee; which first made the school free in part, or for all classes, etc. Then there are other

¹ See below for each of these towns.

² There was one town in Plymouth Colony, Rehoboth, that gives some evidence of action. The proprietors, in granting land and drawing lots, allowed "The School-master" a portion. In 1643 his part is recorded as worth £50; in 1644 Lot No. 8 was assigned to him, and in 1645 Lot No. 49. But nothing further is known concerning the actual opening of a school. (Bliss, *Hist. of Rehoboth*, pp. 23-34.) The town of Plymouth made no provision for a town school until May 20, 1672. See *Rec. Town of Plymouth*, I (1636-75), 115, 124. See also Bradford, *Hist. Plymouth Plantation* (1606-1646), ed. by W. T. Davis, p. 170.

³ There are a few other towns that have a claim, but the evidence is so scanty and inconclusive that they are omitted from this discussion.

questions such as those involving the development of administration, supervision, and support; the content of the curriculum, and the means taken to make public education effective and general.

But there are numerous difficulties which hinder satisfactory answers to such questions besides the lack of complete data already mentioned. Would a mere proposal for a town school, or the date set for its opening, or proof that it was actually in operation, mark the date of its establishment? A school might be established by a vote in a regular town meeting, but its support and management remain wholly in private hands; or it might be privately established and receive occasional aid from the town. Would a voluntary contribution, decided upon in a town meeting, but unenforced, warrant the assertion that a school had been established by the town and was supported by public taxation? Is it proper to speak of a "free school" which was free only to the poor, or which derived a considerable portion of its support from tuition fees? In the brief account of the eleven schools which follows there will be illustrations of these problems. We shall consider what educational principles were established and endeavor to award credit to the towns which were responsible for them.

April 13, 1635, the town of Boston voted that "our brother Philemon Pormont, shalbe intreated to become scholemaster, for the teaching and nourtering of children with us." With no subsequent vote on this particular matter, we cannot assert that the school was opened, or, if opened, that it was supported by the town.¹ Indeed there is no vote respecting a town school for nearly seven years.² January 10, 1641 $\frac{1}{2}$, it was voted, at a general town meeting, that "Deare" Island, granted to the town by the General

¹ "Second Rept. Rec. Com.," *Boston Town Rec.* 1634-60, p. 5.

² A meeting of the "richer inhabitants" of Boston was held August 12, 1636, when a subscription amounting to £39 6s. 10d. was made by forty-five persons, named, for maintaining a "free schoomaster for the youth with us, Mr. Daniel Maud being now also chosen thereunto." This record was copied into the town records at the end of the volume. It really has no official place there, as it is not a record of a town meeting, and support of a school by voluntary subscription cannot in any sense be called town support. (See "Second Rept. Rec. Com.," *op. cit.*, p. 165.) Mr. Maud was granted a garden plot April 17, 1637, and Mr. Pormont a tract of land January 8, 1637/8 (*ibid.*, pp. 16, 25). The latter left Boston very soon after, and went to Exeter, New Hampshire (Belknap, *Hist. of N.H.*, I, 37).

Court in 1634/5,¹ should be improved "for the maintenance of a free schoole for the Towne" or for other purposes, "the sayd schoole being sufficiently Provided for."² The island was not rented until December 30, 1644, and then for three years only at the rate of £7 a year.³ These votes mark a change in policy on the part of the town, and show that the previous method of support had become unsatisfactory. The principle of granting public land as a permanent endowment for education had been one of the main sources of support in England, and was now being tried out in New England, in several towns, even before Boston adopted the plan. A few weeks before the vote to rent the island, the selectmen, at one of their meetings, ordered the constables to pay to Deacon Eliot (one of the selectmen) for Mr. Woodbridge, "eight pounds⁴ due to him for keeping the Schoole the Last yeare."⁵ This also indicates a change of policy and shows that the town was assuming more responsibility for support of the school. It is uncertain from what source this money came, though the order seems to indicate some contract with the schoolmaster, whereby the town through the selectmen had agreed to grant him a stipulated sum, perhaps in part payment for his services. The money was probably drawn from general funds obtained by taxes levied for town purposes.⁶ Yet it is possible that it represents a voluntary contribution, collected by the constables. Winthrop has a note on school support

¹ March 4, 1634/5. *Rec. Co. Mass. Bay*, I, 139.

² "Second Rept. Rec. Com.," *op. cit.*, p. 65.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 82. This order was passed at a meeting of the selectmen. On January 31, 1641/2, the town granted the use of the land to Captain Gibones "until the Towne doe let the same" (*ibid.*, p. 65).

⁴ *Ibid.*, December 2, 1644. Thus the year December 2, 1643, to December 2, 1644, is the first in which there is evidence that support of the school came from town funds.

⁵ On October 27, 1645, the selectmen ordered the constables to "sett off six shillings of Henry Messenger's Rates" for mending the "Schoole Masters fence" ("Second Rept. Rec. Com.," *op. cit.*, p. 86). This appears to be an order similar to that of December 2, 1644, and both indicate the beginnings of support by taxation.

⁶ The selectmen decided on the town rate and then gave orders to the constables to pay certain sums due, out of the money collected. For example, on July 25, 1644, the constables were ordered to pay £4 10s to Arthur Perry, part of £7 due him for his services in drumming. Similar payments were ordered at this same meeting ("Second Rept. Rec. Com.," *op. cit.*, p. 80).

under date July 3, 1645, which has often been quoted, but part of which is not confirmed by other evidence. His version is: "Divers free schools were erected as at Roxbury (for maintenance whereof every inhabitant bound some house or land for a yearly allowance forever) and at Boston (where they made an order to allow forever 50 pounds to the master and an house, and 30 pounds to an usher, who should also teach to read and write and cipher, and Indians' children were to be taught freely, and the charge to be yearly by contribution, either by voluntary allowance, or by rate of such as refused, etc., and this order was confirmed by the general court). Other towns did the like, providing maintenance by several means."¹ Neither the town records of Boston nor those of the selectmen contain any such order, nor is there any such reference in the records of the General Court at this date; nor is there any evidence of the appointment of an usher, or more than one teacher, until 1666.² An order was made in 1650 to pay "Mr. Woodmansey, the Schoolmaster," £50 by rate, but no usher is mentioned.³ There is therefore doubt concerning Winthrop's statements. Apparently he has confused events of a later date with those of 1645 or before. It should be noted that he says nothing of the rental of Dear Island, which according to the town's vote of three years before might be improved for the use of the school, and which was actually rented six months before the date of Winthrop's entry.

The evidence submitted fails to show that the town of Boston appropriated any funds for the support of the school between 1635 and December 2, 1643. We are therefore forced to the conclusion that its support must have been from private sources, and that Mr. Pormont and Mr. Maud, assuming that the school was in operation in this period, were maintained in the manner common in such cases, by contributions⁴ and tuition fees.

¹ Winthrop, *Journal*, etc., ed. by Hosmer, II, 224. Winthrop's failure to mention the School at Boston until 1645 is significant.

² "Rept. of Rec. Com.," *Boston Town Records (1660-1701)*, March 26, 1666, p. 30. In the list of ushers of the school the first mentioned is Mr. Hinchman, appointed in 1666 by the above vote. (H. F. Jenks, *Cat. of Bost. Pub. Lat. Sch.*, p. 16.)

³ "Second Rept. Rec. Com.," *op. cit.*, March 11, 1650, p. 99.

⁴ Compare Jenks, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

On June 3, 1636, the town of Charlestown voted as follows: "Mr. Wm. Witherell was agreed with to keepe a schoole for a twelve monthe" to begin August 8, and have £40 "this year."¹ February 12, 1637/8, a committee was appointed by the town to settle Mr. Witherell's wages "for the yeare past in pt. and pt. to come."² These two items indicate that the town established, opened, and supported a town school. The agreement is definite, including the salary and the date of beginning and ending the service—a full year. The town assumed responsibility for payment of the salary, and appointed the first committee (the germ of the school committee) in any New England town to manage school affairs. The power to settle the wages due for work already done and work to be done is good evidence that the school had been in operation for a considerable period and was to be continued.³ If kept a year from August 8, 1636, as the first vote provided, and for the "yeare past," viz., from August 8, 1637, as the second vote indicates, the school would have been in continuous operation for eighteen months. No other New England town can show as good evidence as Charlestown on these points within the dates mentioned. The exact method of raising the salary is not mentioned, but both votes indicate that the money was collected and administered by officials appointed by the town. On January 20, 1646/7, the town adopted a more complex system of support. It was agreed "that A Rate" of £15 should be "gathered of the Town towards

¹ *Charlestown Archives*, Vol. XX; *MS Town Records*, II (1629-1664), 11. (See Frothingham, *Hist. of Charlestown*, pp. 1-3, for comment on the early MS records of the town, which are copies of originals now lost.) Mr. Witherell was granted a house plot February 11, 1636/7, had a house, as recorded, March 3, 1637, participated in a division of land April 23, 1638, and sold his house December 28, 1638 (*Chas. Archives*, pp. 11, 13, 18-19, 21). Sometime in 1638 he removed to Duxbury (Winsor, *Hist. of Duxbury*, pp. 263, 346).

² *Chas. Archives*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

³ This record is of unusual importance, and was omitted by Mr. Frothingham in the account of the school in his history of Charlestown. It reads: "About Mr. Witherell it was referred to Mr. Greene & Wm. Lerner to settle his wages for the yeare past in pt and pt to come, & they chose Ralph Sprague for A third." In the margin is written, "To provide of settling ye Grammer Schoolemers Sallary" (*Chas. Archives*, *op. cit.*, p. 17). Mr. Lerner was one of the selectmen, Mr. Greene the ruling elder of the church, and Mr. Sprague was a prosperous farmer and had been a member of the first board of selectmen. (Frothingham, *op. cit.*, pp. 79, 81, 51-2.)

the schoole for this year"; secondly, that £5 due the town for rent of Lovell's Island should be paid for the use of the school by the town; thirdly, that the town's part of "Misticke Ware" should be appropriated "ffor the Schoole fforever."¹ This vote is important, for it is the first recorded in Massachusetts which provides for raising a *definite* sum by *rate*; viz., by taxation to be levied, presumably as other taxes, on all property-holders. In the margin of the record we find the words, "Allowance granted for the Towne Schoole";² additional evidence of the use of this important principle of school support. It should be noted also that Charlestown voted to open her school *August 8, 1636*. There is no evidence that the Boston vote of 1635 resulted in the opening of a school. Moreover, the date of the subscription for a free school was *August 12, 1636*, with no proof of the date when it was opened. Therefore the date set for the opening of the Charlestown School was *four days* before the meeting of the richer inhabitants of Boston, who subscribed for a free school. Note also that the vote of Charlestown was taken in *town meeting* more than three months before this agreement of private individuals was made.

On May 20, 1639, the town of Dorchester voted to impose an annual rent of £20 forever on "Tomson's" Island,³ to be paid by every person having property there and proportionate to the amount held by each, toward the maintenance of a school. The sum mentioned was to be paid to a schoolmaster, chosen by the freemen, to teach "English, latin and other tongues, and also writing." The elders and seven men (selectmen) were given power to decide whether "maydes shalbe taught with the boyes or not."

¹ Chas. Archives, *op. cit.*, p. 36. Lovell's Island was granted the town by the General Court, October 28, 1636 (*Rec. Co. Mass. Bay*, I, 183). "Misticke Ware" referred to a fishery in which the town had a share. Lovell's Island seems to have been rented for twenty years, and the income applied for the support of the school (see Frothingham, *op. cit.*, p. 65). In 1636 there were seventy-two men in Charlestown with wives and children (*ibid.*, p. 98). Rates had been levied by the town for the colony tax since 1630 (*ibid.*, p. 99).

² Chas. Archives, *op. cit.*

³ Granted by the General Court, March 4, 1634/5 (*ibid.*, p. 39). The land was divided, but just what proportion of the inhabitants held shares is unknown. See *Hist. of Dorchester* (By a Com. of Dorch. Ant. and Hist. Soc.), p. 419. "Fourth Rept. Rec. Com., *Dorch. Town Rec. 1633-1689*," pp. 30-31 (apportionment of "other land," dated March 18, 1637/8).

A refusal to pay the rent imposed subjected the owner to a levy by distress or a forfeit of his land.¹ On February 7, 1641-2, because of the difficulty of collecting rent from no less than "Sixscore or therabout," and because the rent when collected was not alone "sufficient maintenance for a Schoole, without some addicon thereunto," the owners bequeathed the island to the town, "Towards the Maintenance of a free schoole in Dorchester aforsayd for the instructinge & Teachinge of Children & Youth in good literature and Learninge."² It was to be let to not more than ten persons, by the inhabitants or their agents, for its full value; and the sum realized was to be paid only for the use of the schoolmaster, a condition stipulated by the donors. On March 14, 1645, rules and orders were presented to the town for the government of the school and confirmed.³ Three men, called wardens or overseers, chosen by the town for life, were made a permanent committee to manage the school; viz., to collect and lay out its income and account for the same to the town, supply the schoolmaster, with the consent of the town, pay his wages, and keep the schoolhouse in repair. The support was to come from the "school stock," or in case of need the wardens might "repayre to the 7 men of the Towne for the time being who shall have power to taxe the Town," to an amount sufficient to pay for the repair of the schoolhouse. They were to provide firewood for the school and tax the scholars for this purpose. Finally they were to see that the schoolmaster instructed all pupils sent to him, whether their parents were "poore or rich not refusing any who have Right and Interest in the Schoole."⁴

The vote of 1639 thus provided for a permanent school, with the amount and method of support definitely fixed. The town did not grant its own public land or provide for the taxation of persons

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

² This document is printed in *Hist. of Dorchester*, pp. 422-24. It is signed by seventy-one persons, and a facsimile of their signatures is given by Orcutt, *Good Old Dorchester*, p. 292, and by Blake, *Annals of Dorchester*.

³ "Fourth Rept. Rec. Com.," *op. cit.*, pp. 54-57.

⁴ In the rules and orders there are interesting regulations set forth respecting the length of the school year and sessions, religious instruction, including catechizing, morals, manners, and discipline. In general the wardens were to see that the master trained up the children of the town in "religion, learning and Civilitie."

who might later become inhabitants of the town. Indeed the levy did not fall necessarily on all the property-holders in the town at this date. It may be regarded as a voluntary contribution from those holding the land in question, or a forced contribution imposed on all the owners of the land by a majority vote in town meeting. In either case the owners were bound by the town vote to pay the contribution even if later they were disinclined to keep the agreement. It is perhaps reasonable to call this a species of public support, especially in view of the fact that refusal to pay subjected the owner to a levy by distress or forfeiture, as in the case of failure to pay other taxes, and because a large number of the inhabitants held the land in question. But the case lacks certain of the important elements of real public support. On the other hand, however, we must bear in mind that this plan was a failure. The deed of gift, February, 1642, by the proprietors of the island, was a voluntary contribution, and its tendency was to relieve property-holders to some extent of a possible annual tax for school support, since the income from the rent of the island was to be used for the main support of the school. This gift was not made by a vote in town meeting, but was a bequest of land owned by certain individuals. Although there were at least 120 who had rights in the island at this date, only seventy-one signed the document (about 60 per cent of those who were owners) conveying the land to the town. Between 1642 and 1647, then, the school at Dorchester was a privately endowed school, not supported by public taxation, and not even endowed by the town with its own property.¹ The gift was made necessary because of neglect or refusal of some to pay their dues, and perhaps the disinclination of the town to levy by distress. No provision was made by the town within these dates for additional income, except the right of the selectmen to lay a tax for the repair of the schoolhouse if requested to do so by the wardens. We have no evidence that such a tax was laid. Indeed, there seems to have been little inclination to raise money by taxation, even after the town lost the island in 1648 by a decision

¹ The distinction between town land, viz., undivided land owned by the town as a corporate body, and divided land, viz., land owned by individuals, is important. Even if every inhabitant possessed land on the island and then conveyed it to the town, it would not be endowment by the town, but by individuals.

of the General Court. In a petition (1648) for more land, the town complained that the school was "like to faile" for want of land to support it.¹ The school was a town school, because managed by the town. It was public, open to all classes, and, in theory at least, was free. But provision was made for a tax on pupils for firewood, and the complaint in 1648 that the school was "like to faile" does not indicate that town support had developed much by that date. We have no record of the amount received from the rental of "Tomson's" Island, but, as has been seen, Dear Island, Boston, was let at only £7 in 1644, and Lovell's Island, Charlestown, for £5, apparently, in 1647. It is quite possible even that tuition fees or gifts were resorted to, to help support the school in this period.

The method of management by a permanent committee, wardens or overseers, was distinctly English, and similar committees, "feoffees," were proposed by both Dedham and Ipswich, before Dorchester.² The wardens may be considered a type of school committee, though not apparently the source of the town school committees developed later. While the town delegated certain powers to this body, it took care to reserve to itself the final power in appointing new wardens, requiring an accounting of their management, approving the schoolmaster chosen, and levying a tax through the selectmen for repair of the schoolhouse. The wardens did not exercise power in the later history of the school to the extent one would expect.

The Dorchester school appears to have been in operation by October 31, 1639, Thomas Waterhouse³ being the first master, and, apparently, continuously throughout the period to 1647. It appears then that Dorchester gave less public support for education

¹ See *Hist. of Dorchester*, pp. 161-64, for the documents on this point. A petition of October 8, 1659, asserts that the loss of the island resulted in "the almost if not total overthrow of or free scoole w^{ch} was soe hopefull for posterity, both our owne and neihsors also who had or might have reaped benefit thereby." (*Op. cit.*, p. 433).

² See below on this point.

³ Mr. Waterhouse was, apparently, teaching October 31, 1639, for a vote on that date relieved him from teaching writing "only to doe what he can conveniently therein" ("Fourth Rept. Rec. Com.," *op. cit.*, p. 40). He returned to England about 1642 (*Hist. of Dorchester*, pp. 479-81).

between 1642 and 1647 than Boston, and showed less inclination to raise money by taxation than either Boston or Charlestown.

Salem thus records a vote at a general town meeting in February, 1639/40: "Young Mr. Norris Chose by this Assemblie to teach skoole."¹ At the Quarterly Court, March 30, 1641, "Col. Endecot brought up the matter of a free skoole and therefore wished a whole town meeting about it;" whereupon it was decided "that Goodman Auger Warne a towne meeting the second day of the week."² The next vote of the town occurred September 30, 1644, as follows: "Ordered that a vote be published one [*Sic*] the next Lecture day that such as have Children to be kept at schoole would bring in their names and what they will give for one whole year & Also That if any poore body hath children or a childe to be put to Schoole & not able to pay for their schooling That the Town will pay it by a rate."³ These items show that the town of Salem was depending on voluntary contributions, in the main, for the support of the school. The principle of taxation by rate was adopted only for the education of the children of those parents unable to contribute. This policy of school support, viz., distributing the burden partly on parents of pupils sending children and partly on the whole body of inhabitants paying taxes, was often adopted by other New England towns in the seventeenth century. It may be noted that this is the first mention of the word "rate" in a town record of Massachusetts, though we have no evidence that it was actually laid at this time for the purpose stated.⁴

¹ "Salem Town Rec. 1634-59," in *Essex Inst. Hist. Collec.*, IX, 97 ff. He evidently commenced teaching soon after for Lechford speaks of him as Schoolmaster at Salem. (See *Plaine Dealing*, p. 84.)

² *Hist. of Salem*, I, 427-28, as quoted by Felt. The order varies as printed—" [Goodman Auger is ordered to call a general town meeting the second day of the week to see about a free school—*Waste Book*]" *Rec. and Files of Quar. Courts of Essex Co.*, Vol. I, 1636-56, p. 25.

³ "Salem Town Rec.," *op. cit.*, p. 132. No other vote on the school occurred before 1647.

⁴ The word "rate," used in connection with school support, occurs in the records of six towns before January 21, 1647, viz.: Salem, September 30, 1644; Boston, December, 2, 1644; Dedham, January 1, 1644/5; Dorchester, March 15, 1645; Guilford (in New Haven Colony), October 7, 1646; and Charlestown, January 20, 1646/7. Besides these towns there were two others where payment by rate was evidently

Under the date November, 1642, the Ipswich town records declare: "The town votes that there shall be a free school."¹ On October 3, 1643, the town voted that in view of a former grant respecting the establishment of a free school, "now there should be XIIb yannum raised as the Committee in that case yvided, shall determine. And that there shalbe Seven free schollars, or soe many as the Feoffees (to be chosen) from tyme to tyme shall order," but the number was not to be more than seven.² As there is no further vote between 1643 and 1647, and little seems to be known concerning the history of the school at this date, it is uncertain whether the vote of 1643 was carried out.³ It provides for an expenditure of £11, but the amount was not necessarily to be raised by taxation. It shows that a committee, to be appointed by the town, was to raise the money and that feoffees, apparently to be chosen by the town, should be a permanent committee.

On January 2, 1642/3, the town of Dedham voted unanimously to set apart land for public use, "for the Towne, the Church, and A fre Schoole, viz: 40 acres at the least or 60 acres at the most."⁴ On January 1, 1644/5, because of "the great necessitie of providing some meanes for the Education of the youth in or sd Towne," Dedham voted unanimously to raise £20 annually to maintain a schoolmaster to keep a free school. It was also voted that this sum, together with the land already set apart for public use, should

intended when such phrases were used as "common stock" of the town (New Haven, February 25, 1641/2), and "town charge" (Hartford, April, 1643). There was considerable objection to the use of a "rate" even for the support of the church up to 1643. See note in Lechford, *Plaine Dealing*, pp. 50-51; and Hubbard, "Hist. of New Eng.," *op. cit.*, p. 412. "This new way of cessment was offensive to some."

¹ *Ipswich Town Rec.*, Vol. I, 1634-50 (1899), p. 24b. "The First third day of the 9th 1642." In the old record book of the Grammar School is an item dated 1636: "A Grammar School is set up, but does not succeed." Felt says this has the appearance of having been copied (*Hist. of Ipswich, etc.*, p. 83.)

² *Ipswich Town Rec.*, p. 26.

³ Like Salem, the notion of free education applied only to poor children; so also in the vote of Hartford, April, 1643, below. There is no other vote on schools before 1647, and there is doubt whether it existed as a town school, 1644-50. See Hammatt, "Ipswich Grammar School," in *New Eng. Hist. and Gen. Reg.*, VI, 64.

⁴ *Dedham Town Rec.*, Vol. III, 1636-59, p. 92. There are fifty-one names given of those who voted on this matter.

be intrusted to "Feoffees" chosen by the town, who should improve the same for the use of the school; and that as the profits arose from the land "everyman may be proportionably abated" of his proportion of the £ 20, "freely to be given to ye use aforesaid." The "Feoffees" were given power to make a *rate* for the necessary charges in improving the land, accounting for the same to the town. Five men named were chosen feoffees, three of whom were on the board of Selectmen for this year.¹ This plan evidently contemplated support by voluntary contributions, until the income from the land increased sufficiently to support the school without such contribution. The vote lacks the element of a tax, for nothing is said about a levy by distress in case of a failure to pay, as occurred in the case of Dorchester in its first vote of 1639. The phrase "freely to be given" indicates a disposition to avoid giving any power to force a man to support the school, as a tax levied by distress would do. Again the notion evidently was to provide eventually for an endowed school. Dedham thus established a public town school, free in theory at least, supported in part by contributions, voluntarily granted in town meeting and apparently by the most of the property-owners, and in part from income to be derived from town land. As in the case of Dorchester, however, it lacks all the elements of a real tax, since the contribution in question cannot be considered compulsory. Nevertheless, the right to tax every property-holder for the improvement of the school land is provided for, and thus there might be partial support by general taxation, somewhat like the case of Dorchester, and preceding the latter by more than three months. But we have no evidence that such a tax was laid. Dedham also, it may be noted, like Boston, granted town land, for the endowment of the school.²

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105. In a division of land February 4, 1644/5, eighty-three men received portions (*ibid.*, pp. 109-10). On this same date the town voted to grant the remainder of the "Training ground to the Feoffees" to be improved by them to October 31, 1650. By the same vote five men, named, were chosen feoffees. Two of them, with one of the selectmen, were appointed to set off the land in question, March 4, 1644/5 (*ibid.*, p. 108).

² There is no other vote before 1647, and the records of the feoffees are not extant. Proof of the opening of the school before 1647 is wanting. See *Dedham Hist. Reg.*, I, 88.

The schools at Cambridge and Newbury were apparently private. The former was not aided by the town before 1647,¹ and the latter was aided only once within this period and then for a single year.² The school at Roxbury was not a town school, and was neither established, managed, nor supported by a vote in town meeting before 1647.³

Under date of February 25, 1641/2, at a General Court held at New Haven, it was ordered that a free school should be set up in the town, and the pastor Mr. Davenport, with the magistrates, should consider "Whatt yearly allowance is meete to be given to itt out of the comō stock of the towne, and also whatt rules and orders are meet to be observed in and about the same."⁴ Owing to a doubt as to the accuracy of the records kept by Secretary Fugill, the General Court ordered a revision of the colony and town records, February 24, 1644/5. In the minutes given under this order the following appears:

"For the better trayning upp of youth in this towne, that through God's Blessinge they may be fitted for publique service hereafter, either in church or

¹ There is but one item relating to education on the town records of Cambridge before 1647. On May 11, 1638, the town voted that two and two-thirds acres be set aside "to the Professor is to the Town's use for evr. for a publick scoole or Colledge to the use of Mr. Nath. Eaton as long as he shall be Employed in that work," etc. Mr. Nathaniel Eaton, who was granted about two acres by the same vote, was the first teacher at Harvard College (1638-40). This is evidently aid to higher education. Elijah Corlett, master of the Grammar School at this time, or a little later, was not aided by the town until November 13, 1648 (*ibid.*, p. 77). Cambridge, therefore, cannot be properly included in the list of towns that established or aided a town school before 1647. For Eaton, see Hubbard, *Gen. Hist. New Eng.*, Mass. Hist. Soc. Collec., 2d Ser., V, 247. Hubbard was a graduate of Harvard, class of 1642.

² In 1639 the town of Newbury granted ten acres of land to Anthony Somerby for his "Encouragement" to keep school for one year. As no other vote occurs on this subject before 1647, it was probably conducted as a private school if in operation after this date. Mr. Somerby was town clerk of Newbury for more than thirty years. (Currier, *Hist. of Newbury*, p. 395.)

³ The school at Roxbury was established in 1645 by voluntary gifts of persons interested. The agreement was signed by sixty-four persons, who bound themselves, their heirs, and assignees to pay annually a sum amounting to £21 10s 8d for the support of a "free School." Those not signing the document were to have no "further benefit [of the school] thereby than other strangers shall have who are no inhabitants." The town refused to contribute to its support up to 1666. (Dillaway, *Hist. of Grammar Sch. of Roxbury*, pp. 7-13, 20, 39, 33; and Winthrop, *Journal*, *loc. cit.*

⁴ Hoadly, *Rec. of Col. and Planta. of New Haven*, 1638-1649, p. 62.

comonweale, it is ordered, that a free schoole be sett upp, & the magistrates with the teaching elders are intreated to consider what rules and orders are meete to be observed & what allowance may be convenient for the schoolmars care & paynes, wch shalbe paid out of the towns stocke. According to wch order, 20 £ a yeare was paid to Mr. Ezekeiell Cheevers, the present schoolema^r for 2 or 3 yeares at first, but that not proveing a competent maintenance, in August, 1644, it was enlarged to 30 £ a yeare & soe contineweth."¹

It seems evident that the vote of February 25, 1641/2, had been put into effect soon after its passage, and that Mr. Cheevers must have received an allowance of £20 out of the "Common Stock" of the town as early as the spring or summer of 1642—the phrase "two or three years" not allowing us to set an exact date.

Guilford, in New Haven Colony, was founded in 1639, and a school supported by contributions appears to have been established in 1643.² The first town vote on the subject, October 7, 1646, provided for a committee of three to collect contributions for the salaries of Mr. Whitfield (pastor) and Mr. Higginson.³ The record continues: "It is ordered that whoever shall put any child to schoole to Mr. Higginson shall not pay for lesse than a quarter's time at once and so shall be reckoned with all quarterly, though they have neglected to send all the time, at the rate of four shillings by the quarter to the Treasurer. It is agreed and ordered that ye additional sum toward Mr. Higginson's maintenance, with respect to the schoole, shall be paid by the Treasurer, yearly, out of the best of the rates in due season, according to our agreements." This vote shows that the support fell partly on the parents sending children to the school and partly "out of the best of the rates in due season." The meaning of this phrase is not clear, but it seems to indicate that an additional sum to make up a salary agreed upon was raised by rate. This is the fifth New England town to use the word "rate" in connection with the support of a town school before 1647.⁴

¹ Hoadly, *op. cit.*, p. 120. At a court held February 8, 1643/4, Mr. Cheevers "desired 4-3-6 out of the estate of Mr. Trobridge, which is justly due to him for teaching ye children" (*ibid.*, p. 124). This also seems to indicate support by rate.

² Mr. Higginson was teacher of the church, meaning a sort of assistant pastor, and apparently had charge of the school from 1643 to 1646, supported, like the pastor, by voluntary contributions. (Steiner, *Hist. of Guilford*, pp. 27, 35, 40, 60.)

³ Steiner, *op. cit.*, p. 394; Smith, *Hist. of Guilford*, p. 80. ⁴ See n. 4, p. 372.

On December 6, 1642, the town of Hartford voted as follows: "It is agreed that thurte pownd a yeer shall be seatled upon the School by the towne for efer."¹ But in April, 1643, this plan was greatly modified, by ordering Mr. Andrews, the teacher, to teach one year from March 25, 1643, for £16, to be paid by the parents sending their children in proportion to the time sent, at the rate of 20 shillings a year. But those unable to pay should give "notes" to the selectmen, who would pay the teacher at the town's charge. Mr. Andrews was to keep the record and sent "Nottes" and demand payment. If then his wages did not amount to the sum specified, the selectmen were to collect and pay what was lacking "at the Townes Charges."² The first vote evidently provided for a free school established and supported by the town. The second provided for most of the income by tuition fees, and the rest by taxation, first for the education of poor children, (thus preceding Salem by seventeen months) and secondly, to make up a contingent remainder which might arise from a small number of pupils who were obliged to pay for their education. If we assume that Mr. Cheevers, at New Haven, did not receive his allowance from the town until after December 6, 1642, then Hartford would have the honor of establishing the first public free school supported by a general tax, provided we admit that the £30 was to be raised in this way. It is not so stated, however, and, moreover, it is very unlikely that New Haven did not grant money out of the "common stock" before the date in question. Although the word "rate" or "tax" is not used in the New Haven records, there is hardly any other way to account for the payments to Mr. Cheevers than by means of a tax.

According to a statement of John Callender,³ Robert Lenthal,⁴ who had been pastor at Weymouth, Massachusetts, came to

¹ *Hartford Town Votes*, Vol. I, 1635-1716, p. 63, in *Collec. Conn. Hist. Soc.*, Vol. VI (1897).

² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³ *An Historical Discourse, etc.*, (Ed. by Elton, 1843), p. 110. This was first published in 1739 and is the only evidence we have for this vote which does not occur in the printed records surviving. (Arnold, *Hist. of R.I.*, I, 145; *Collec. R. I. Hist. Soc.*, IV, 116; *R.I. Colo. Rec.*, I, 104.)

⁴ Mr. Lenthal returned to England before March 17, 1642 (*ibid.*, p. 119). See also, Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary, etc.*, III, 78; and Lechford, *Plaine Dealing*, pp. 57-58, 94.

Newport, Rhode Island, and was admitted a freeman August 6, 1640. On August 20, he was

"by vote called to keep a public school for the learning of youth, and for his encouragement there was granted to him and his heirs one hundred acres of land, and four more for an house lot, it was also voted that one hundred acres should be laid forth, and appropriated for a school, for encouragement of the poorer sort, to train up their youth in learning, and Mr. Robert Lenthal, while he continues to teach school, is to have the benefit thereof.¹

Nothing further is known concerning this school.

To award the honors to each town is not easy, but the following observations seem warranted from the evidence submitted. Boston was the first town to choose a schoolmaster in town meeting (April 13, 1635). Charlestown was the first to vote to establish a town school (June 3, 1636), appoint a schoolmaster with salary and length of service fixed, set a date for opening the school (August 8, 1636), and appoint a school committee (February 12, 1637/8). It is the first to give good evidence that it had a town school in continuous operation for a considerable period (August 8, 1636, to February 12, 1637/8). There is no evidence to show whether the £ 40 voted in 1636 was raised by general taxation, yet the votes show that the town made itself responsible for payment, and the next year appointed a committee in town meeting to settle the wages of the master for past and future work. This seems to be reasonably good proof that Charlestown should have the honor of establishing the first town school, because all the steps involving the establishment, management, and support were taken in town meeting. Dorchester was the first to provide for a permanent town school, with the annual income fixed and the method of raising it determined (May 20, 1639), though the payments made by individuals fell only on persons holding certain property. Nevertheless since these payments could be collected by distress it is fair to call it a tax-supported school, though the tax was not raised by a rate or general levy on all property-holders. Salem was the first town in Massachusetts (but see Newport and Hartford) to vote to support a town school in part by a rate on all property-holders (September 30, 1644), though such support was for poor children.

¹ Callender, *op. cit.*

Dedham was the first to vote to raise a definite sum annually (January 1, 1644/5), "freely to be given," presumably by "everyman" (*everyman* may be proportionally abated," etc.). This is support by voluntary contribution. It is impossible to say what the town would have done in case a contributor later refused to contribute. Without another vote it seems that compulsion could not have been used. There is no evidence that such a vote was taken or even that it was necessary. This school, therefore, cannot be considered a tax-supported school, as this word is ordinarily used. Dedham was also the first town to *elect* a permanent committee to manage school property, "feoffees," (February 4, 1644/5), though Ipswich was the first to *propose* such a committee (October 3, 1643). Newbury was the first to grant public or town land to a schoolmaster, expressly for his "encouragement" to keep school (1639). Newport was the first to set apart a large tract of town land as a permanent endowment for a school (August 6, 1640), though the income was, by the vote, to be used for the "poorer sort." New Haven was the first which gives satisfactory evidence that it supported a town school out of "town stock," meaning, presumably, money raised by a general tax levied on all property-holders (1642). This view, however, rejects the vote of Charlestown as inconclusive on the method of raising the £40 voted in 1636. Hartford was the first to vote an annual sum, for the support of the school, "by the towne for efer" (December 6, 1642); the intent being, apparently, to raise the money by taxation. It was also the first to vote to provide for the education of poor children "at the Townes Charges;" viz., evidently by taxation (April, 1643).

We may conclude then that certain towns in New England had, before 1647, voluntarily established, managed, and supported town schools, and developed the following important principles: First, towns in their corporate capacity took the initiative in establishing town or public schools, and in aiding those already established. Secondly, they assumed responsibility for the support of schools out of public property, partly through gifts of land to schoolmasters, partly by setting aside tracts of land as a permanent endowment. Thirdly, they voted to levy a rate or tax on property-holders for the partial support of the school. This method was

proposed, and the word "rate" used, by at least six of the eleven towns mentioned before January 21, 1647, and taxation is implied in two others. Thus the foundation for the famous act of 1647 had been well laid by voluntary effort of the towns in question. Nevertheless the action of a few of the larger towns must not blind us to the fact that this accounts for less than one-fifth of all the towns that had been established in New England at this date. Even allowing for the fact that a few more would probably be added if the records were complete, yet they could accommodate but a very small proportion of the pupils of school age. New England had a population of at least 25,000 by 1647,¹ and at that time we do not have evidence of more than eleven *town* schools in operation. If other towns had schools they were private rather than public. In most cases, no doubt, the people were depending on parental education. Indeed, the Massachusetts act of 1642 does not mention schools, but complains that there was "great neglect in many parents and masters in training up their children in learning and labor . . . especially of their ability to read and understand the principles of religion and the capital laws of the country."² Thus at this date the school was not considered by the General Court, or even by most of the towns, as a matter of public concern, to be supported by the town, as was the church, for example. The school as an organized public agency for carrying on education was fighting for recognition, and great efforts would have to be made before the principles established voluntarily by a few towns would become general. The General Court of Massachusetts recognized this in 1647, and took the next important step in public education by compelling towns with a certain number of families to establish certain types of town schools. But the discussion of this famous act and its results is reserved for later treatment.

¹ This is estimated from the data given by Dexter, "Estimates of Population in the American Colonies," *Proc. Am. Ant. Soc.*, U.S., V, 22-32.

² *Rec. Co. Mass. Bay*, II, 6, June 14, 1642.